

How to make a book-loving school

by Michael Rosen

1. Does the school have in place any kind of **home-school liaison** where someone talks with individual parents about specific books, libraries, book departments, magazines, book clubs, book shows, that might interest this specific child and his or her carers?

Interestingly, the great synthetic phonics research example, cited by government and everyone else – the Clackmannanshire experiment, did have one such home school liaison scheme in place, generously funded.

2. Does the school hold **book events all year round** with writers, illustrators, story-tellers, librarians, book enthusiasts coming in and talking and performing for the children and parents?

3. Does the school not only invite in a syndicated book fair but also invites in **local bookshops**, specialist bookshops and has books available for borrowing or buying to support the visiting writers, speakers, performers and story-tellers?

4. Is there someone in the school trained and interested in running the **school library** and who is on hand to give advice to every teacher to help them with their class libraries?

5. Does the school run **book clubs** for teachers, parents and children?

6. Does the school give every **parent information** – perhaps in the form of an attractive pack – on the local library, the local bookshop? Does the school take children and parents to these venues?

7. Do the school and individual classes **adopt an author or illustrator** for the week, or month or term and investigate, explore and do creative work around that author and illustrator?

8. Do the children **make books of their own**? Are these readily available for everyone in the school and parents too? Does the school encourage parents to come in and make books with the children? Does the school celebrate and cherish these books as much as it celebrates its most important activities?

9. Does the school encourage children to **pass books between each other** by means of book swaps, prominently displayed reviews, assembly presentation of 'this week's good read', book posters and the like?

10. Does the school seize **every possible moment** - eg visits to museums, visits from specialists of any kind, school trips – to support these events and activities with books, eliciting from all and sundry what their favourite books are or were when they were children?

11. Are there **regular whole school projects** (like, say Black History Month, or 'The Sea') where a topic or theme can be supported by books of all kinds, all genres and all ages? Is the school on these occasions inundated with books?

12. Are **assemblies and classrooms** frequently a place when children are encouraged to become fascinated by something – anything! – to do with a book or what's in a book?

13. Are the **head's study and teachers' desks** places where special, intriguing, exciting, ever-changing, odd, old, weird books lurk?

14. Does the school keep and use **book reviews of children's books** from *Books for Keeps*, *Carousel*, *Times Educational Supplement*, *Child and Junior Education*, *The School Librarian*, the broadsheet review pages and the internet?

15. Is there at least one time every week where children will have **nothing else to do with a book other than to read it**, listen to it, and chat about it in an open-ended way?

16. I don't think any **meeting held by teachers to help parents understand what literacy is**, should ever be without the presence in the room and the time to look at them, of such books as Trish Cooke's and Helen Oxenbury's *So Much*, Tony Ross's *I Want My Potty*, Shirley Hughes's *Dogger*, books by Anthony Browne, Penny Dunbar, Michael Foreman, Mick Inkpen, Lauren Child, Quentin Blake, Colin MacNaughton, Emma Chichester Clark and many, many more – apologies to those I've not mentioned.

17. There should be *Beano* annuals and football programmes open at the Junior Supporters pages, there should be books that tie in with **TV shows and films**.

18. Teachers could and should wrap up a meeting with parents with a **read-aloud session**, say, of a Julia Donaldson/Axel Scheffler masterpiece, with compulsory joining in!

19. Parents and grandparents should be encouraged to **bring in and show off the books and magazines**, no matter how humble, that they've kept since their childhoods.

20. The re-introduction of **children's literature courses** on teacher and assistant teacher training courses.

For more information about Michael Rosen and his tips for how to make a book-loving school, visit:

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